

COINS

1981 sets go on sale, as buyers balk at prices

By Roger Boye

Amid complaints from many collectors, the Bureau of the Mint began accepting orders early this month for 1981 uncirculated coin sets.

The hobbyists are unhappy about the price of \$11 a set—\$2 more than the government charged last year and the second biggest one-year boost since the U.S. Mint first made uncirculated sets in 1947.

"Such a hefty increase by an administration espousing economy and anti-inflation policies shows the continued presence of the 'gouge-the-collector' attitude at the Treasury Department," said an editorial in Numismatic News, a hobby newspaper.

Besides being the most expensive ever, this year's sets are also the last that Uncle Sam will make. Starting in 1982, the government will sell only proof sets; the uncirculated sets [also called "mint sets"] will be a victim of President Reagan's budget cuts.

Each 1981 set contains 13 coins, including three 1981-dated Susan B. Anthony dollars. The government will not produce any 1981 Anthonys for general circulation, forcing collectors who want to own a specimen to buy either a 1981 proof or uncirculated set.

The mint plans to accept orders until Oct. 31, but will announce an earlier cutoff date if it receives more orders than expected. To buy, send a check to Bureau of the Mint, 55 Mint St., San Francisco, Cal. 94175. The limit is five sets a person.

● One of the finest known collections of old advertising tokens from Illinois is being sold by a longtime Kane County hobbyist.

"For 12 years I've collected tokens that can be attributed to the 19th Century," said Joseph Schmidt of Gilberts. "They come in all sizes, shapes, and compositions ranging from lowly brass to silver.

Schmidt's hoard contains more than 160 pieces, four times larger than any similar group ever before cataloged. Some of the specimens are probably unique.

"It's terribly difficult to place a value on the collection . . . [but] it could go in the low-five-figure range," Schmidt said. The earliest tokens are dated 1845, and many promote now-defunct Chicago businesses.

Schmidt writes articles on tokens for national publications. He said collectors often call old advertising tokens "storecards" because the metal tokens were an early form of calling cards.

Schmidt is selling the tokens in a mail-bid auction that closes Sept. 30. The tokens are offered individually, but bids are also accepted for the entire collection.

To get a free copy of the sale catalog, write to Tom Wall Mail Bid Sales, P.O. Box 1242, Independence, Mo. 64051.

● Starting sometime this fall, the Treasury Department will offer to collectors uncut sheets of \$1 or \$2 bills, with either 16 or 32 bills to the sheet.

Although the government has not yet set prices, the sheets will come with a covering suitable for framing and display.

Uncle Sam last sold uncut sheets to collectors during the 1950s; some of the old sheets are now prized collector's items.